

Oliver

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ABOUT THE STORY

The circus man ordered ten elephants, but Oliver made number eleven—so he was left behind in the city. Oliver tried to find a place for himself in the zoo and as a pet, but what he really wanted was to be a circus elephant. Would he ever get his wish?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

Syd Hoff was born and raised in New York City. He studied at the National Academy of Design and drew cartoons for *The New Yorker* and *Esquire* magazine. He is the author and illustrator of the well-loved books *Danny and the Dinosaur*, *Stanley*, and *The Horse in Harry's Room*. He lives in Miami Beach, Florida.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children if they have ever seen an elephant perform at the circus. Have volunteers describe the elephant's actions. Then tell them that the book they will read is about an elephant who wants to perform in a circus.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- "Why doesn't the circus man take Oliver?"
- "Why doesn't Oliver find a home at the zoo?"
- "What happens when Oliver tries to jump over a fence?"
- "How does Oliver help out at the playground?"
- "Why does the circus man change his mind about Oliver?" (*Draw conclusions*)
- "Do you think Oliver will be a good circus elephant? Why or why not?" (*Make judgements*)

Vocabulary

Write these words and definitions on the chalkboard. Ask volunteers to draw lines matching each word from the story with its definition. Then have children use each word in a sentence of their own.

circus
taxi
weighing
acrobats
jugglers

performers who twist their bodies
show with animals and performers held in a tent
car that you pay to ride in
performers who toss objects in the air
finding out how many pounds something is

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Science: *Elephant Habits*

How do real elephants act? Are they like Oliver? Divide children into small groups and have them use reference materials and books to find out how elephants behave in the wild. Each group can jot down notes and report on what they find to the rest of the class.

Health: *When You Grow Up*

Oliver and the playground children talk about what they want to be. Have children do the same thing, telling what they want to be when they grow up. Ask them to explain why they want the careers they mention, and talk about what kind of training or schooling each career requires.

Social Studies: *Where Elephants Live*

Elephants are found on two continents, and the elephants on the two continents differ from each other in several ways. Ask children to work in small groups to find out about African and Indian elephants. Have them write down the differences between the two kinds of elephants and draw a picture of each kind of elephant. Display the pictures in the classroom.

Art: *The Funniest Clown*

The clowns in Oliver are wearing funny outfits. Ask children to draw pictures of the funniest clowns they can imagine. Display the drawings in the classroom and talk about which clowns are the silliest-looking.

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

Elephant Facts

Have children use the keyword elephant to go online to find additional information about elephants. Encourage them to answer one of these questions:

1. What animals threaten elephants in the wild?
2. What do elephants like to eat?
3. How big do elephants get?